

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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WITH EXPECTED HOME HEATING PRICE SPIKES, 81 LAWMAKERS REQUEST FUNDS FOR LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE

***The Department of Energy Predicts A Nearly 20% Increase in Home Heating
Expenditures for Families***

WASHINGTON, DC – Today Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, sent a letter to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education urging an increase in funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The letter, signed by 81 lawmakers, requests that the 2006 Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill include a \$4 billion increase in funding for LIHEAP to meet the needs of the American families facing skyrocketing home heating costs this winter.

“Congress needs to help the millions of families that will be clobbered by skyrocketing home heating bills this winter,” said Representative Edward J. Markey, who organized the letter along with Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-VT). Markey added, “Millions of families are going to be sitting at the kitchen table trying to figure out how to pay bills that are, in the worst instances, up more than 70% from last year.”

The Department of Energy (DOE) estimates that energy expenditures in the United States will be \$1.03 trillion, approximately 18 percent above 2004 levels. The DOE predicts residential per-household expenditures for fuels this winter to increase 71% for natural gas, 17% for electricity, 31% for heating oil, and 40% for propane – compared to last winter.

The letter urging appropriators to consider LIHEAP increases states: “Without LIHEAP, millions of senior citizens on fixed incomes, working families with children, and persons with disabilities from one end of the country to the next will be forced to choose between heating their homes and putting food on the table. In the richest country in the world, no one should ever have to make that unacceptable choice.”

The Energy Policy Act, signed in August, authorized \$5.1 billion in annual spending for LIHEAP, however the current appropriations being considered for this program is nearly \$3 billion short of this level of funding. The lawmakers’ letter urged appropriators to begin increasing spending for LIHEAP now in light of the historically high increases in home heating costs. The 2006 Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill is currently in a House-Senate conference and likely to be debated in November.

Representative Markey is currently preparing a report on the cost for consumers of skyrocketing home heating prices. For more information on the letter sent today or Markey's work on affordable energy check out: www.house.gov/markey

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